

CHANGES IN SOCIAL INSTITUTE OF LATVIAN EDUCATION: PARENTS' ATTITUDE

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There are numerous social problems in the Latvian Institute of Education that affect all levels of education. The problems have been rooted in the demographic and economic situation. The large migration and the low birth rate affect the social institute of education in long-term perspective. The open market of the European states not only promotes the migration to foreign countries, but also increases the students' decision to study abroad. Projection of the demographic situation determines a low number of those students who will choose to continue their studies in Latvia. It is important to improve the current situation and to create a high-quality education approach. Early identification of problems and their prompt dissolving may significantly contribute to the institute in long-term perspective. The social institute of education affects a wide circle of society. During the change process, an important aspect of attitude measurement is involvement of stakeholders, including student parents. The author of this publication focuses on the parents' attitude. The aim of the research is to clarify the parents' attitude for the upcoming changes in the educational institute.

Social change is a term used to investigate the changes that occur in interpersonal relationships and community social organizations. Sometimes social changes are predictable, but usually it is difficult to predict them (especially in education). [1, p. 476]. Education can be defined as a social institute, which provides cooperation of institutions and community groups. The change process requires community involvement, especially when it affects the social institution which is involved in the society forming process. A function of education is not only about teaching, but also it helps to develop society.

Education is a social institute which ensures society members with important knowledge, including basic skills, job skills and cultural norms, and values [2, p. 518]. To resolve the existent problems the Latvian Ministry of Education and Science has set a 10 reform plan for

each level of education. The change plan in secondary education includes changes of organization of the education content and implementation of a new type of financing method [3].

The information for the research was obtained through a questionnaire survey, including all Latvian general education parents who are members of NGOs parent councils. 536 parents were approached, of whom 328 participated in the survey. The respondents were Latvian school parent council members. The research was conducted in May, 2012.

The author examines the parents' attitude towards the existing changes in the Latvian secondary education. In the study the author uses attitude measurements, which were determined using statement questioners. These questions had advanced on each of the changes - changes of organization of the education content and implementation of a new type of financing method. Almost all (86 %) of the parents admit the necessity for changes in education. Contradiction is caused by the respondents' attitude for the system of social institute of education - the parents agree about the necessity of changes, but at the same time, half of the parents (49 %) are satisfied with the existing educational institute. Eight out of ten parents want to understand the activities of the institute of education better, because they admit that their knowledge of it is not complete. The parents say that they know where to derive information (71 %), but the question is whether this information is complete and explanatory, if the parents wish to obtain more knowledge on issues that are affecting education. The parents do not have confidence in their ability to influence the educational institute. Half of the respondents (51 %) feel that they can not affect the learning process in schools.

The parents' attitude about the new method of the financing system in schools is negative. They disagree about the so-called «voucher» adopting in schools. This method determines the amount of the grant per pupil education. It is not directly transferred to educational institutes, but to the students or parents who choose the best school options for their children. It is not just about money. It is more like a method of coupons with fixed value. The parents' activity of assessment of the attitude of funding changes is relatively lower. In general, all statements about the planned changes were answered by almost all respondents (87 %), but a tenth of the respondents avoided

answering at all. Apparently, the parents are not enough informed about the new funding mechanism and its positive aspects. On the contrary, to questions about changes of organization of education, that includes extension of the school year, almost all of the parents (95 %) respond. Latvian parents are skeptic about extending the school year, and the attitude of major respondents (84 %) is negative. There is still an opinion in society that the state wants to emulate the example of European countries, but at the same time there still is sensible adhering to the existing system. Theorists define that as resistance to changes. This has been discussed in sociological theories, also in organization and management theories.

It is human nature to resist change if the individuals who have to implement the change and live with its effects are not involved in its creation. Major change requires people to give up feelings of comfort, long-held values or beliefs, and established routines [4, p. 647]. Public involvement is necessary to avoid the resistance of change.

Conclusions

1. The students' parents agree with the necessity for changes in the social institute of education, but whereas they only support the planned state reforms partly. The parents maintain lack of information about the changes and their effectiveness.

2. Despite the parents' positive attitude for the change in the social education institute, there still can be observable doubts and resistance to the planned change in the parents' attitude. The thought of inability to influence the education process, causes the parents' negative attitude. The resistance has been caused by the parents' own awareness of the power that prevents participation in the change process.

References

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